

APPENDIX E

History

Acadia National Park Timeline

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APPENDIX E – HISTORY

Acadia National Park Historical Timeline

3000 BC–1900

Although deep shellheaps testify to Indian encampments dating back 5000 years in Acadia National Park, prehistoric records are scanty. The first written description of Maine coast Indians, recorded 100 years after European trade contacts began, describe American Indians. Members of the Wabanaki tribe, the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy lived in this area.

1524

Giovanni Verazzano, an Italian navigator for the French crown sailed along the North American coast, placing the name “Arcadia” on areas between New Jersey and North Carolina. Map makers later mistakenly placed that title between the 40th and 46th parallel (between present-day Philadelphia and beyond Montreal).

1604–1605

Pierre Dugua, sieur de Mons, after being granted authority from King Henry IV of France over all of North America from 40th-46th parallel, set sail with his navigator Samuel Champlain, and established the settlement of St. Croix on an island along today’s Maine-Canadian border. While on a scouting mission along the coast, he wrote about the island he named “Isle de Monts Deserts.”

1613

Records indicate that it may have been at Fernald Point in the mouth of Somes Sound where a group of French Jesuits, dispatched by Madame de Guerchville of France, established the settlement of Saint Sauveur. The settlement was short-lived, falling to the British. For the next 150 years, both the British and French would claim this region of North America for their own.

1622

The English lay claim to Mount Desert Island when Sir Robert Mansell, Vice Admiral of His Majesty’s Navy, purchased the island.

1688

Self proclaimed nobleman, Antoine Lamuet, Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac, received a huge land grant from the French Crown including Mount Desert Island. After visiting here, he went on to found the present-day city of Detroit. Yes, there is a connection between the car and the nobleman!

1759

The French and Indian Wars ended after nearly a century and a half of conflict. British troops triumphed at Quebec, ending French dominion in the Acadia region.

1760

King George III of England gave Francis Bernard, the last British governor of Massachusetts, a royal land grant on Mount Desert Island.

1761

Bernard offered free land to Abraham Somes and James Richardson who settled their families at what is now Somesville.

1790

Census records indicate that 800 settlers lived on Mount Desert Island.

1820

Census records indicate that 1300 settlers lived on Mount Desert Island. Farming and lumbering vied with fishing and shipbuilding as major occupations.

1840

First steamship wharf at Clark's Point in Southwest Harbor.

1860s–1870s

Artists and journalists begin to visit Mount Desert Island, depicting the beauty of the island in both paintings and prose. Two of the most famous artists, Frederic Church and Thomas Cole of the Hudson River School spent summers here. The presence of these visitors issued in the age of the rusticators on the island, as farmers and fishermen opened their homes to accommodate them.

1870

The entire first growth of forest had been removed from Mount Desert Island. Quarrying operations for the beautiful pink granite began at Hall Quarry on the west side of the island.

1880s

Hotels begin springing up on the island to accommodate the influx of visitors. Seventeen hotels were in Bar Harbor, with many others in Seal Harbor, Northeast Harbor, and Southwest Harbor.

1880s–1900s

The wealthy make Mount Desert Island, in particular the eastern side, a playground. Multi-room mansions called “cottages” are built, and Bar Harbor replaces Newport, Rhode Island, as the fashionable capitol of where to “summer.”

1901

The Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations is formed by Charles Eliot, George B. Dorr, and a handful of other summer residents who became concerned with the rapid development of Mount Desert Island. Their goal was to begin protecting land in its natural state.

1913

The Trustees, having acquired 5000 acres, turn to the federal government to create a national park on Mount Desert Island. It marks the beginning of George B. Dorr’s many visits to Washington DC to advocate for the formation of the park.

1913–1940s

John D. Rockefeller begins building carriage roads. Once the park is established, he donates land parcels with carriage roads in place, resulting in over 11,000 acres of land and 51 total miles of carriage roads (45 in the park).

1916

President Woodrow Wilson announces the creation of Sieur de Monts National Monument. George B. Dorr is the first superintendent. Original charter dictates that lands are only to be donated, not purchased with federal funds.

1919

Sieur de Monts National Monument becomes Lafayette National Park, the first national park east of the Mississippi.

1929

Schoodic Peninsula is donated to the park. Name is changed to Acadia National Park.

1930s–1940s

Decline of the cottage era. The income tax, World War I, and the Depression take away much of the unbridled wealth of many summer residents. Cottages begin to be boarded up or razed.

1947

Over 17,000 acres burned on the eastern side of Mount Desert Island, 11,000 of which were in the park.

1990s

Park's final boundary legislation directs park to purchase or land swap for parcels of specific land critical to protect. Once these parcels are acquired, no more lands will be added to the park, either by donation or purchase. Park begins to take on conservation easements by private landowners.

National parks become more important in the national eye as not only a place for recreation and respite, but critical for research and to use as indicators of environmental problems. Acadia National Park is a crucial barometer of environmental degradation such as air quality, declining amphibian populations, endangered species, and more.

Today

Over three million visitors a year enjoy Acadia National Park, thanks in part to all of the hard work, dedication, and foresight of those that came before.

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Who's Who at Acadia

Giovanni de Verazzano: An Italian navigator sailing for France in 1524, Verazzano sailed along the eastern seaboard of present day Northeast and mid-Atlantic states. A cartographer's error placed Arcadia, the name Verazzano called some places along the shoreline of Virginia and North Carolina, to the region between present-day Philadelphia and Canada.

Pierre Dugua sieur de Mons: A French nobleman commissioned as Lieutenant Governor of New France by King Henry IV in 1603. As Lieutenant Governor, de Mons gained authority over all North America between the 40th and 46th parallels, from present-day Philadelphia to Montreal. Sieur de Mons, his navigator Samuel Champlain, and his crew sailed to the New World in 1604, establishing an ill-fated French settlement on the Maine-Canada border at St. Croix.

Samuel Champlain: In September of 1604, Samuel Champlain, navigator for Sieur de Mons, set sail southward from the settlement of St. Croix in the mouth of the St. Croix River separating present day Maine and Canada. Along with 12 soldiers and two Indians, Champlain scouted the indented coast. The sight of a large island with several prominent rounded mountains prompted Champlain to note the island in his journal calling it the “Isles des Monts Deserts.”

The Wabanaki: The native peoples of eastern and coastal Maine, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Consisting of four tribes, the Penobscot, the Passamaquoddy, the Micmac, and the Maliseet, their population was estimated around 32,000 before European arrival. Because of European-introduced diseases, 75% of tribal members died in the early 1600s. The Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes lived in the Acadia region.

Madame de Guerchville and Jesuit colonies: A French supporter of the Jesuits, Guerchville purchased Sieur de Mons land grant with the intention of settling Jesuit colonies in New France. A group of Jesuits from the Port Royal colony in present-day Canada were believed to have settled in the mouth of Somes Sound. The colony, established in 1613, and named St. Sauveur was short-lived, destroyed by the English.

Antoine Lamuet, Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac: A self-proclaimed French nobleman, Cadillac received a land grant of Mount Desert Island from King Louis XIV in 1688. An experienced navigator and cartographer, Cadillac's relevance to the area included practical nautical and land descriptions around the Mount Desert Island area. He did not stay long on the island, and went on to found Detroit.

Governor Francis Bernard: The last colonial governor of Boston in the mid 1700s before independence from Britain was gained. He encouraged settlers on Mount Desert Island, which he acquired in 1759 as a re-payment for personal monies he used on the governor's mansion in Boston

Abraham Somes and James Richardson: Considered Mount Desert Island's first permanent white settlers, establishing homes at the end of Somes Sound in 1761. "Betwixt the Hills" would later become Somesville.

The Hudson River School: In the mid 1800s, this school for 19th century artists generated paintings of panoramic views, sunrises, and sunsets. Elements of humanity, such as Native Americans, frontiersmen, or farms, were often part of the scenes. Influenced by European theories of nature as an overwhelming power and hallowed ground reflecting the hand of God, many paintings captured a quickly changing landscape and served as travel posters for those interested in visiting scenic places like Mount Desert Island.

Thomas Cole: The leader of the Hudson River School, Cole visited Mount Desert Island in 1844. Fascinated by the landscape, he painted numerous scenes all with an ethereal quality to them depicting the splendor of mountains, forests, lakes, and sea.

Frederic Church: A student of Thomas Cole, his many visits here in the mid 1800s resulted in paintings depicting the island's essence. He named some of the island's prominent features such as Eagle Lake and the Beehive. Other names such as Lake Silence for Echo Lake are no longer used. More paintings of the island were done by Church than Cole.

Charles W. Eliot: President of Harvard and a regular summer resident of Mount Desert Island, it was Eliot who began the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations in 1901 whose sole purpose was to "acquire, by devise, gift or purchase, and to own, arrange, hold, maintain, or improve for public use lands in Hancock County, Maine, which by reason of scenic beauty, historical interest, sanitary advantage or other like reasons may become available for such purpose."

George Bucknam Dorr: A wealthy Boston native whose family fortune came from the textile trade with the West Indies. A great lover of Mount Desert Island, Dorr is considered the Father of Acadia. A member of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, it was primarily Dorr in the forefront who championed a national park on Mount Desert Island. Upon its inception into the National Park System in 1916, Dorr became superintendent with a salary of \$1.00 a year. By the time he died, he had spent his entire family fortune, much of it on the growth of Acadia National Park.

William Otis Sawtelle: Founder of the Islesford Historic Museum, Sawtelle was a physics professor at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. Like some other summer residents of the time, Sawtelle's fascination with the maritime history prompted him to work towards its preservation. Having purchased the old Islesford Market in 1928, once the Hadlock Ship Store, he used this to begin showing collected artifacts. Eventually the fire-safe brick Islesford Historical Museum was built to house the collection.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A summer resident of Seal Harbor and the son of wealthy oil tycoon, Rockefeller Jr.'s deep appreciation for Mount Desert Island coupled with his love of the horse and carriage resulted in a remarkable system of carriage roads. Rockefeller's legacy to the park not only includes the carriage roads but also 11,000 acres of land and partial financing of the Park Loop Road. Other national park beneficiaries include the Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah, Grand Tetons, Virgin Island National Park, and Mesa Verde among others.

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Quotes

EXPLORERS

“It is very high, and notched in places, so that there is the appearance to one at sea, as of seven or eight mountains extending along near each other. The summit of most of them is destitute of trees, as there are only rocks on them. The woods consist of pines, firs, and birches only. I named it Isles des Monts Deserts.”

—*Samuel Champlain, 1604*

WABANAKI

“I should consider these Indians incomparably more fortunate than ourselves: for, after all, their lives are not vexed by a thousand annoyances as are ours.”

—*Father Christian Le Clerq, a Jesuit priest, early 1600s*

WRITERS DURING RUSTICATOR ERA

“These mountains are the bones of the earth, which, being broken and upheaved, form some of our most striking and beautiful scenery, giving us lovely valleys, wild mountain passes and sparkling freshwater lakes, within the sound of the murmuring sea.”

—*Travel writer Benjamin De Costa, “Rambles in Mount Desert,” 1842*

ARTISTS DURING RUSTICATOR ERA

“Yankee enterprise has little sympathy with the picturesque and it behooves our artists to rescue from its grasp the little that is left before it is forever too late. This is their mission.”

—*Thomas Cole, head of Hudson River School, 1844*

“This is a very grand scene—the craggy mountains, the dark pond of dark brown water—the golden sea sand of the beach and the light green sea with its surf altogether with the woods of varied color- make a magnificent effect such as is seldom seen combined in one scene.”

—*Thomas Cole on Sand Beach and Beehive*

HOTEL ERA

“There is a vigorous, sensible, healthy feeling in all they do, and not a bit of that overdressed, pretentious, non-sensical, unhealthy sentimentality which may be found at other places.”

—*George Ward Nichols, “Mount Desert Harpers Magazine,” August 1872*

COTTAGE ERA

“The following groups have come to the social resorts in this order: First, artists and writers in search of good scenery and solitude; second, professors and clergymen and other so called solid people with long vacations in search of the simple life; third “nice millionaires” in search of a good place for their children to lead the simple life (as lived by the “solid people”); fourth, “naughty millionaires” who wished to associate socially with “nice millionaires” but who built million dollar cottages and million dollar clubs, dressed up for dinner, gave balls and utterly destroyed the simple life; and fifth, trouble.”

—*Cleveland Amory—The Last Resorts, 1952, reference to early 1900s social resorts*

THE BEGINNINGS OF A NATIONAL PARK

“Scenically, its impressive headlands give Mount Desert the distinction of combining sea and mountain... Back of the shore is a mountain and lake wilderness which is typical in a remarkable degree of the range of Appalachian scenery... There are few spots, if any, which can combine the variety and luxuriance of the eastern forests in such small compass. The rocks have their distinction... worn by the ice sheets of the glacial period, eroded by the frosts and rains of the ages, their bases carved by the sea, their surfaces painted by the mosses and lichens of today, they are exhibits of scientific interest as well as beauty. Still another distinction is Mount Desert’s wealth of bird life. All the conditions for a bird sanctuary in the east seem to be here fulfilled.”

—*Franklin K. Lane, 1918, Secretary of Interior on why this should be a National Park*

ON CARRIAGE ROADS AND JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR.

“He built and maintained a carriage road system (motors prohibited) that gives one who travels over it, or one of the loops that make up the system—a great experience—an experience that presents to the traveler all that Acadia Park has to offer—its woods, its lakes, the grand views, the intimate views, the ocean, the mountains, etc.”

“He knows intimately the physical geography and the beauties of Mount Desert Island, its hills, its shoreline, its streams, its woods, where the fine views are—where autumn colors are best, etc. Few people know the lay of the land and its interesting details as well as he.”

“The carriage roads in Acadia National Park will one day get the recognition they deserve—through use by the public, if not by carriages, by saddle horse, bicycle or by foot. They will be much used and not by the automobile.”

—*Thomas Vint, 4/26/55, Chief, Division of Design and Construction, NPS, to Horace Albright, Director*